

## “THE POETS” IN THE ‘ΕΡΜΗΝΕΙΑ OF DIONYSIUS OF FOURNA

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**A**MONG the works published by the theologian and poet Michael Margounios—known also as Maximus, bishop of Cythera—is an edition of the *Triodion*.<sup>1</sup> It was published in 1600 and, like most of the Greek service books of the period, was printed in Venice.<sup>2</sup> It is notable chiefly for the design of its title page, which is unique to this particular work. This (text figure) consists of thirty roundels arranged symmetrically against an architectural frame, with five supporting winged *putti*; Christ is represented in the topmost roundel, with the dove of the Holy Ghost above. An inscription can be seen on the scrolls arranged round the shoulders of the two supporting angels on either side, and this gives the clue to the factor that unites the subjects of the other portraits: Οἱ τὰ μέλη πλέξαντες ὕμνων ἐνθάδων;<sup>3</sup> they are all hymnographers of the Byzantine church.

Because of its design and subject, this title page has been of interest to various scholars in the past;<sup>4</sup> it has not hitherto

been pointed out, however, that the list of hymnographers provides an almost precise parallel to the selection of names under the heading “The Poets” in the ‘Ερμηνεία τῆς ζωγραφικῆς τέχνης of Dionysius of Fournā.<sup>5</sup> This is one of the groups of names under such titles as “The Stylites,” “The Martyrs,” etc., assembled in this part of the ‘Ερμηνεία, and in this case each poet’s name is accompanied by a text taken from his writings. Although it can be seen from the accompanying table (see *infra*) that the complete sequence of all the names is not identical in the two works, the overall selection of hymnographers’ names, combined with the similarity of groupings within the lists, make it impossible to regard the similarity as fortuitous.

This comparison immediately raises the question: which came first—the design of Margounios, or the list in the ‘Ερμηνεία? The title page of Margounios can be dated with virtual certainty to *ca.* 1600, as not only was that the year of its publication, but the years *ca.* 1573–1602 cover the period of its author’s literary activity.<sup>6</sup> The only previous such attempt to assemble a list of poets had been made in the fourteenth century by Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopoulos, and this must have been known to Margounios since he took his inscription from it.<sup>7</sup> The Greek Bishop’s list was super-

<sup>1</sup> For the biography of Margounios, see E. Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique des XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles*, II (reprint, Paris, 1962), pp. xxxiii–lxxvii, and G. Fedalto, *Massimo Margunio e il suo Commento al «De Trinitate» di S. Agostino (1588)* (Brescia, 1968), 15–76.

<sup>2</sup> Legrand, *op. cit.*, 142 (no. 234), and G. Fedalto, *op. cit.*, 276; besides the copies cited in these two works which are in Munich, Universitätsbibliothek, and Leyden, Rijksuniversiteit Library, there is also one in Oxford, Bodleian, I. 1. 2. Th. Seld. (see text figure). I would like to express my thanks to the members of the staffs of these libraries, and of the Marciana Library, Venice, for their help.

<sup>3</sup> The first line of a verse composed by Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopoulos, quoted among the works of Leo Allatius in J. A. Fabricius, *Bibliotheca Graeca*, V (Hamburg, 1712), 239; see also C. Emereau, “Les catalogues d’hymnographes byzantins,” *Echos d’Orient*, 20 (1921), 147–54.

<sup>4</sup> Leo Allatius in Fabricius, *op. cit.*; the Bollandists Papebroch and Rayé, in the *Acta Sanctorum Aprilis*, III (Paris-Rome, 1866), 796–97, and *ActaSS Iunii*, II (Paris-Rome,

1867), pp. xix–xxi, where they also included a version of the title page engraved by Hendrik Causé (text reprinted PG, 29, pp. cccxxii–cccxxiii); J. B. Pitra, *Hymnographie de l’Eglise grecque* (Rome, 1867), pp. cliii–clvi; W. Christ and M. Paranikas, *Anthologia Graeca carminum christianorum* (Leipzig, 1871), p. xlii; Emereau, *op. cit.*, 147.

<sup>5</sup> Ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus (St. Petersburg, 1909), 166–68.

<sup>6</sup> See particularly Fedalto, *op. cit.*, 15–76 and his Appendices.

<sup>7</sup> See *supra*, note 3, for quotation in full; (in the edition of Fabricius the poets’ names are in capitals, emphasizing the use of the verse as a catalogue).

seded later in the seventeenth century both by the collection of sixty-nine names given by Leo Allatius as the basis of his (unwritten) treatise *De melodis Graecorum*, as well as by the collection of the names of sixty-five hymnographers given by Nicholas Boulgaris in his *Ἱερὰ Κατήχησις* first published in 1681.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, it should be noted that the accomplished printer of Margounios' *Triodion*, Antonio Pinelli, did not follow his usual practice of reusing, often for many years afterward, the same design for the title pages of other service books with only the title and inscription changed, but in this case did not even use it in an edition of the *Pentekostarion* by the same author that was published in the same year.<sup>9</sup> While it can, therefore, be safely assumed that Margounios' collection of hymnographers' names must have originated in 1600 or shortly before, the dates between which Dionysius compiled his *Ἑρμηνεία* have been carefully calculated by K. Demaras as falling most probably between 1729 and 1733,<sup>10</sup> and, even if this is not completely acceptable, it is hard to see how he can have given the work which bears his name its present form before the 1720's.

The basic evidence would therefore seem to point very clearly to this section of Dionysius' *Ἑρμηνεία* being derived from the printed work of Margounios. However, a small number of earlier manuscripts exists which contain the kind of iconographical material that Dionysius includes in the large central part of his text, and it would theoretically be possible for these to provide an intermediate source.<sup>11</sup> An examination of the few earlier manuscripts with icono-

graphical material, of which the contents are known, however, shows that the material is presented in a much more condensed and abbreviated form, often consisting of just the names of scenes and texts held by individuals without any of the pictorial mise-en-scène given by Dionysius.<sup>12</sup> Most important of all, none of them contains a specifically entitled list of Poets; where they are mentioned at all is in lists of various other kinds of saints.<sup>13</sup>

This *prima facie* likelihood that Dionysius adopted his list of hymnographers from the title page of the *Triodion* of Margounios is further increased when the few differences between the two lists are examined. It can be seen that Dionysius augmented the total number of hymnographers by two, and inserted Romanos the melodist, Nicholas, and Christopher Protasecretēs. The first of

<sup>12</sup> The earliest dated MS with non-technical subject matter, of which the text is known, appears to be that copied in Jerusalem by Porphyrij Uspenskij; dated 1674, it was published by Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἑρμηνεία*, 289–301 (see *ibid.*, pp. λα'-λβ', and *idem*, *Ἱεροσολυμιτικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη*, I [St. Petersburg, 1891], 292, no. 214; entitled *Βιβλίον τῆς ζωγραφικῆς τέχνης*, it occupies fols. 133–76). The MSS published by Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἑρμηνεία*, 261–73 and 274–88, are said to be 18th-century copies of earlier MSS from the late 16th and first half of the 17th century respectively. Also preceding Dionysius is one reported as having been seen by H. Brockhaus, dated 1630 (see *idem*, *Die Kunst in den Athos-Klostern*, both the first edition [Leipzig, 1891], 160 note 3, and the second edition [Leipzig, 1924], 318), but the nature of the contents is not recorded. The 9th–10th century text *Ἐλπίου τοῦ Ρωμαίου* can only be considered as evidence of an interest in the appearance of certain religious and biblical personalities, rather than part of the tradition of the *Ἑρμηνεία* (see M. Chadzidakis, *Ἐκ τῶν Ἐλπίου τοῦ Ρωμαίου*, in *Ἐπετηρίς Ἑταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν*, 14 (1938), 393–414. For a recent, although not up-to-date, survey of known MSS of the *Ἑρμηνεία*, see V. Grecu, "Neue Handschriften der *Ἑρμηνεία* τῆς ζωγραφικῆς τέχνης," in *Εἰς μνήμην Σπυριδωνος Λάμπρου* (Athens, 1935), 303–10. In addition to the twenty MSS of known location given here, with three further MSS of unknown whereabouts, the identity of fourteen more is known to the present writer.

<sup>13</sup> E.g., Sophronios of Jerusalem is found among a group entitled *Περὶ τῶν Ἱεραρχῶν* in the Jerusalem MS of 1674 mentioned in note 12 (Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἑρμηνεία*, 291).

<sup>8</sup> For Leo Allatius, see Fabricius, *op. cit.*, 60–61; for editions of Nicholas Boulgaris' work, see E. Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique ou description raisonnée des ouvrages publiés par des Grecs au dix-septième siècle*, II (Paris, 1894), 366–84, and Emereau, *op. cit.*, 149 and note 5.

<sup>9</sup> Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique ... au dix-septième siècle*, I (Paris, 1894), 4 (no. 26) and 123 (no. 94), and Fedalto, *op. cit.*, 276.

<sup>10</sup> K. Demaras, *Θεοφάνους τοῦ ἐκ Φουρνᾶ*, in *Ἑλληνικά* (1937–38), 213–17.

<sup>11</sup> Of those with iconographical subject matter, three were published by Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἑρμηνεία*, 261–301, being dated by him to the late 16th and 17th centuries.

Title-page of *Triodion* of Maximus, bishop of Cythera

(Left-hand side, from the top)

Germanos  
Sophronios  
Philotheos  
Andrew of Crete  
John of Euchaita  
George of Nicomedia  
Methodios  
Cyprianos  
Anatolios  
Leo the emperor  
Leo Magister  
Basil Pigeriotes  
Just[in]os  
Sergios

(Right-hand side, from the top)

[John] Damascene  
Cosmas  
Joseph  
Theophanes  
Byzantios  
Stephen Hagipolites  
George Siceliotes  
Symeon  
Philotheos  
Arsenios  
Babylas  
Ephraim of Caria  
Andrew Pyrrhos  
[Theodore] Studites

(At bottom, centrally)

Casia

Dionysius of Fourni, 'Ερμηνεία, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, pp. 166-68.

Germanos the patriarch  
Sophronios of Jerusalem  
Philotheos the patriarch  
Andrew of Crete  
John of Euchaita  
George of Nicomedia  
Methodios the patriarch  
Cyprianos  
Anatolios the patriarch  
John Damascene  
Cosmas  
Joseph  
Theophanes  
Byzantios  
Stephen Hagipolites  
George Siceliotes  
Symeon Thaumastooreites  
Arsenios  
Babylas  
Ephraim of Caria  
Andrew Pyrrhos  
Theodore Studites  
Romanos the melodist  
Sergios  
Leo the emperor  
Leo Magister  
Basil Pigeriotes  
Christopher Protasecretes  
Justinos  
Nicholas  
Casia

these, Romanos, the *poeta vere Christianus*, is the most surprising omission from the Greek Bishop's list, since he is one of the most famous and illustrious of all Byzantine hymnographers. It is, indeed, possible that the Venetian engraver of Margounios' title page may have made an error here, in that he omitted Romanos but included the name Philotheos twice. Although there are four hymnographers of this name whose works are perpetuated in the Greek office,<sup>14</sup> none

of them is anywhere nearly as well represented as is Romanos, or is anything like as famous as he, and indeed Dionysius omitted a second mention of this name.

As with all the characters he mentions, Dionysius gives a brief description of each of the hymnographers in his list; the relationship between his descriptions and their appearance in the engraving should also be noted. The correspondence is not complete in every case, and of course color cannot be conveyed in the graphic work, but one fact strongly suggests that Dionysius was actually using Margounios' design when formu-

<sup>14</sup> E. Follieri, *Initia Hymnorum Ecclesiae Graecae* (Studi e Testi, 215,2), V. 2 (Vatican City, 1966), 335.

lating some of his descriptions. John Damascene and Stephen Hagiopolites are both described as wearing a σκέπασμα, while Leo the emperor is said to wear a mitre (μίτραν) and Leo Magister, followed by Basil Pigeriotes, to wear a σκιάδι—a broad-brimmed hat. Firstly, Leo the emperor should of course be shown wearing a crown, not a mitre; Dionysius must have been misled both by the title of δεσπότης which appears on his portrait, and by the scale of the depiction which was too small for the engraver to show a crown clearly.<sup>15</sup> Secondly, it is more probable that Margounios intended the other two poets to be thought of as wearing some form of ceremonial helmet rather than broad-brimmed sun-hats. Thirdly, in this context the best translation of σκέπασμα must be “turban,” which is what the two poets in question are wearing in the engraving; the word does not normally have such a precise meaning.

The conclusion that Dionysius was actually referring to this title page when drawing up his list of Poets, seems therefore inescapable, and the implications of this should now be studied. Firstly, it provides us with an insight into the sort of processes through which Dionysius went when compiling his Ἑρμηνεία. Regarding his work, he does himself use the phrase ἄτινα καὶ ἐπιτρόπως ἐσυνάθροισα,<sup>16</sup> implying the idea of an assembly of sources of different kinds. In the present state of our knowledge of the text (to which this new information can now be added) it would seem that part of his self-imposed task included the expansion of relatively brief and mixed lists of saints' names found in slightly earlier manuscripts,<sup>17</sup> breaking them up further into groups and in some cases (as in “The Poets”) supplying a text for each figure. In this context it is worth mentioning that in the manuscript from which Papadopoulos-

Kerameus made his publication<sup>18</sup> there is a strange set of omissions found nowhere else in the work: the initial letter or syllable of the text which accompanies each hymnographer has in almost every case been omitted.<sup>19</sup> A suggested explanation for this is that the texts were taken from printed service books in which the initial letter of each paragraph was set in the margin outside the body of the text, was given a highly decorative form, and was often printed in red. Thus, they were sometimes hard to read (as indeed is the case with Margounios' *Triodion*) which could explain their omission here. This is of course hypothetical and does not, in any case, help to locate Dionysius' source for his texts, which are drawn from a wide variety of liturgical books;<sup>20</sup> it does tend, however, to confirm the uniqueness of this particular group, and the basis for its inclusion in the Ἑρμηνεία.

Secondly, this conclusion provides us with one of the very few firmly dated sources for Dionysius' Ἑρμηνεία. Leaving aside the complex question of the technical part of the work,<sup>21</sup> the other best-known source dates from about a century before, and relates to the section on the Apocalypse. Some time ago this was shown to derive ultimately

<sup>18</sup> Now Saltykov-Ščedrin State Public Library, Leningrad, cod. gr. 708; the list of the Poets is given on pp. 345–48 of the MS. I would like to thank the staff of this Library for making available the MS to me in photographic form, and for their help in answering my queries.

<sup>19</sup> This is not clear in the edition of Papadopoulos-Kerameus. An examination of the MS on which he based his publication has shown that he made several hundred minor alterations to the text, very few of which are indicated. The present writer has completed a new edition of the text in which these are corrected.

<sup>20</sup> Identification of all of the sources has not been possible, but at least sixteen can be found in the Menaia, six in the Triodion and one in the Horologion.

<sup>21</sup> The tradition for purely technical manuals certainly has a very long history in European art; G. Loumyer, *Les traditions techniques de la peinture médiévale* (Brussels-Paris, 1920), 64ff., traces parts of Dionysius' text back to the 9th and 10th century. See also D. Winfield, “Middle and Later Byzantine Wall Painting Methods,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 22 (1968), 61–139.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. the portraits of Byzantine emperors made in the 14th–15th centuries in cod. a. S. 5. 5. (Φ 294) in the Biblioteca Estense, Modena (S. P. Lampros, *Λεύκωμα βυζαντινῶν αὐτοκρατόρων* [Athens, 1930], pls. 71 and 72.)

<sup>16</sup> Ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 4.

<sup>17</sup> As in the Jerusalem MS mentioned above, Papadopoulos-Kerameus, Ἑρμηνεία, 291, 293, 295–96.



from German prints,<sup>22</sup> and it should be noted that this section also has a unique layout, being the only sequence of scenes in which the pictorial description is preceded by the relevant passage quoted from Revelation.<sup>23</sup> On the subject of the date of the sources, further speculation is possible on the period of the ultimate source for Dionysius' list of "The Holy Bishops."<sup>24</sup> Among the seventy-one figures listed is Gregory Palamas, who died in 1359 and is one of the latest individuals to be mentioned in the entire original text.<sup>25</sup> In view of the inclusion of this figure, it is surprising to find that Symeon, bishop of Thessalonica, is omitted; he was one of the most famous and respected personalities in the area, is known to have visited Athos, and would have been most unlikely to be omitted from a list of bishops that included Gregory Palamas. Symeon died in 1429, and there is, therefore, a possibility that the ultimate source for this section may date from the later fourteenth or early fifteenth century; if this was the case this source was in all probability a manuscript rather than a printed book.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, these findings prompt a brief reappraisal of the present state of our knowledge of the text and its background. Again leaving aside the technical part of the work, which certainly has the earliest demonstrable traditions,<sup>27</sup> secure knowledge of the sources

of the iconographic parts is still very fragmentary. In recent years the fullest account of this has been given by A. Xyngopoulos;<sup>28</sup> while this is not the place to discuss fully his main conclusion about this part—that it is to a large extent the work of Dionysius himself—it should be pointed out that this new source does, in its particular field and to a limited extent, confirm this view, although by its nature it can only relate to the section on "The Poets." It also shows that the sources of the work are a matter of considerable variety and complexity, and that any overall solution proposed prematurely will almost certainly be seen in time to be oversimplified. As it is, one can even now point to a variety of competing factors. There is the manuscript tradition which on the present evidence was in existence prior to Dionysius in a relatively limited form, and of which he certainly had specific knowledge.<sup>29</sup> There are a few known non-textual sources, such as those for the Apocalypse sequence and the Poets, of which the dates are known. For all the rest of the material there remains only the supposition that it represents a codification either of existing paintings, principally of the post-Conquest period, or of subjects taken from the Old and New Testaments. While some of the subject matter can best be explained on the basis of the former source,<sup>30</sup> and other parts only on the basis of the latter,<sup>31</sup> much of the rest of Dionysius' work resists any such simple explanation. To take just

<sup>22</sup> L. H. Heydenreich, "Der Apokalypsenzyklus im Athosgebiet und seine Beziehungen zur deutschen Bibelillustration der Reformation," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 8 (1939), 1–40, and J. Renaud, *Le cycle de Dionysios* (Paris, 1943).

<sup>23</sup> Ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 129–39.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 154–57.

<sup>25</sup> The other being Justinos, among the Poets; this must be Justinos Decadyo, who flourished ca. 1500 (C. Emereau, "Hymnographi Byzantini quorum nomina in litteras digessit notulisque adornavit," *Echos d'Orient*, 23 [1924], 284). The name of Saint (*sic*) Bessarion is an addition in a later hand in the MS, p. 321.

<sup>26</sup> Thus emphasizing the variety of possible sources; this name does not occur in the earlier MSS published by Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 'Ερμηνεία, 237–301.

<sup>27</sup> See note 21 *supra*; the basic division of the text into technical and non-technical subject matter was not adopted by V. Grecu in his considerable contributions to knowledge of the text.

<sup>28</sup> Σχεδιασμα ιστορίας της θρησκευτικής ζωγραφικής μετά την άλωση (Athens, 1957), 300–5.

<sup>29</sup> See *ibid.*, 301, and Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 'Ερμηνεία, pp. κε'-λα'.

<sup>30</sup> E.g., the description of the scene of the Nativity (Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 'Ερμηνεία, 86), which represents a fully developed version of the subject with many details from apocryphal sources; Dionysius could hardly have derived this from all the basic textual sources, and there is no known earlier MS of the 'Ερμηνεία which presents the subject in these terms. Other subjects also give the impression of being visually, rather than textually, based, e.g., the "Ladder of Paradise" of John Climacus (*ibid.*, 211), from which even the name of its originator is omitted, as well as such crucial details as the number of steps.

<sup>31</sup> There is no known sequence of paintings, particularly monumental, that corresponds with the 125 scenes from the OT (*ibid.*, 46–73).

one example, there has been virtually no recognition of the part played by liturgical sources in the formation of the Ἑρμηνεία, and yet there are a number of points in the work where this sort of background provides the best explanation for the text.<sup>32</sup> In view

<sup>32</sup> E.g., the enumeration of "The Holy Forefathers according to the Genealogy" (*ibid.*, 73-74); although derived ultimately from the Bible, this sequence of names occurs

of this identification of an unexpected origin for a small part of his work, it would seem prudent to carry researches into the background of the text a great deal further before any firm conclusions on the type or the period of its sources are formed.

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from the 13th century in the Menaion for December, which is the most probable source for Dionysius' list (see P. Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, I [New York, 1966], 52.)